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Book Leaves Nixon A Puzzle

SIX CRISES. By Richard M. Nixon. 460 pages. Doubleday. \$5.95.

MR. NIXON has not here written his memoirs, as he himself is careful to point out. He does not feel that his public career is finished—he is in fact campaigning for the governorship of California—and there is thus an implication that if and when he writes his memoirs he expects to have more events, still veiled by the future, to describe.

This book deals with six crises in his life which also impinged on the life of the nation, at least to the extent that they were major news events. These were the Alger Hiss case; the uproar over his private political fund, which almost forced him off the Republican ticket in 1952; President Eisenhower's heart attack and other illnesses as they affected the Vice President; his 1958 trip to South America, which reached its climax when he was mobbed in Caracas; his trip to the Soviet Union in 1959, and the Presidential election campaign of 1960.

Relations With Ike

Readers who follow the news, and those who have read other books about Mr. Nixon, will find little new in his account of the first five of these crises. The writing is matter-of-fact but undistinguished.

At scattered points he deals with his association with President Eisenhower during the eight years he was the Vice President. Mr. Nixon strengthens the impression that during those years the relationship between the two men was pretty much that of a five-star general and a young staff colonel; their working association was cordial enough but a certain distance was kept between them.

Mr. Nixon has a good deal to say in his book about the process of decision making. He praises General Eisenhower on that score, yet at times he seems to have been sorely troubled, if not confused, by the way the President dealt with his

in the 1952 and 1956 campaigns. In 1952, when the Nixon California political fund was under attack, Mr. Nixon took the position that he would, of course, resign from the ticket if General Eisenhower asked him to do so. But the General told Nixon that this was something for him to decide himself. Some of the Eisenhower advisers told Nixon they thought he should withdraw, but Nixon decided to take his case to the public via television, and the public's reaction convinced him, as well as Eisenhower, that he should stay on the ticket.

In 1956 Eisenhower suggested to Nixon that he might want to move into the Cabinet, perhaps as Secretary of Defense, rather than run again as Vice President. Eisenhower asked Nixon to decide whether he wanted to be on the ticket a second time. Nixon indicates that he himself never had any serious doubts about his own desire, but he was uncertain as to Eisenhower's tactics. After a while he informed the President that he wanted to seek the Vice Presidency again and the President agreed at once.

The Meat Of The Book

The final long chapter (133 pages) contains the meat of the book. It is Mr. Nixon's first detailed review of the 1960 Presidential campaign, which he came so close to winning. Much of the headline news in this chapter already has been covered in the news columns, including Mr. Nixon's criticism of President Kennedy.

Mr. Nixon made the charge that Mr. Kennedy, during the height of the election campaign, threatened national security by publicly urging action against the Castro Government in Cuba, even though he had been advised in confidence by the Central Intelligence Agency that the United States already was assisting and training Cuban exiles for the eventual purpose of supporting an invasion of Cuba.

Mr. Kennedy promptly denied

that he had been informed of the Cuban project at that time, a point on which he was supported by the former CIA director, Allen W. Dulles. Nixon's rejoinder was that he had understood that Mr. Kennedy was given the same information that he himself received.

Nixon Still A Puzzle

As for Mr. Nixon himself, he remains a puzzling, often contradictory, figure. He gives us a detailed account of the struggles he went through in arriving at some of the key decisions in his public life. His report on the 1960 campaign, including his part in the televised debates with Mr. Kennedy, is an important addition to our political history. As could be expected, there is a strong flavor of past, political arguments, and possibly of more to come, in his descriptions.

Each of the first five chapters portrays Mr. Nixon overcoming adversity in one form or another—Premier Khrushchev in the "kitchen debate" in Moscow, the pro-Communist mob in Caracas, the Americans who had doubts about his senatorial campaign fund, and so on.

Tactics, Not Principles

In the last chapter he shows that he can accept defeat, however unwelcome it was. But the book is concerned more with tactics than with principles, with how to score debating points rather than how to operate the Government. The Nixon we see most of the time is the political figure, planning and analyzing campaigns in the glare of the spotlight or the television camera.

Mr. Nixon has always been a man who, in public life, arouses strong likes or strong dislikes. His book seems unlikely to change any opinions which already are fixed; he gives a full picture of Nixon the politician but perhaps he still is too busy with the future to provide a deeper view of Nixon the man. GERALD GRIFFIN,

Chief of the Washington Bureau of The Sun.

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